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**THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE –A TWITTER EXCHANGE**

Of all the documents written in the Revolutionary Period, the *Declaration of Independence* probably best encapsulates American identity and American political values. The natural law which Jefferson relied upon – his emphasis upon inalienable rights and the role of government in society – made the *Declaration of Independence* a document which inspired liberty seeking people across the globe, from the French Revolution of the 1780s, to Ho Chi Minh’s Vietnamese Declaration of Independence in 1945, to more recent history, like the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the presently emerging democratic reforms of the “Arab Spring.” And yet, the values of the *Declaration of Independence* have never been perfectly translated in American society. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called the *Declaration of Independence* our nation’s creed – and dreamed of a day when “this country would live out the true meaning of its creed – that *all* men are created equal.”

While the ideals of the nation may have been articulated beautifully within the document, there was also a fair amount of hypocrisy. Consider this paragraph, which Thomas Jefferson originally included in the *Declaration of Independence*:

He [the king of Britain] has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it’s most sacred rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of *infidel* powers, is the warfare of the CHRISTIAN king of Great Britain. determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought & sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce: and that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which *he* has deprived them, by murdering the people upon whom *he* also obtruded them; thus paying off former crimes committed against the *liberties* of one people, with crimes which he urges them to commit against the *lives* of another.

*Why does this passage so hypocritical, given the circumstances of its author?*

Clearly, the high ideals of the *Declaration of Independence* were admirable, and cherished by those who loved liberty all across the globe. But Americans have not always adhered to the principles of the *Declaration of Independence*. The purpose of this assignment is to consider the practical application of the ideals and values of the *Declaration of Independence* in American society during the Revolutionary Age.

**THE ASSIGNMENT**.

1. Read the *Declaration of Independence* carefully, taking notes on what you consider the most important aspects of the document.

2. **Summarize** the document in **eight (8) “tweets.”** In a tweet, you get 140 characters – that is letters, numbers and symbols, not words – to send out a message. You need to summarize the most important parts of the *Declaration of Independence* - in your own words – in just eight (8) tweets.

2A. At least four of your tweets must include a **hashtag** – that is, a word or phrase prefixed by the symbol “#” which marks a message as being particularly relevant to a certain group of people.

For example, if I were to tweet:

“All men are equal and have the right to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.”

I might include a hashtag like:

“#HypocriticalSlaveOwner” or “#NotWomenMen” or “#EqualRightsNotEqualResults”

In this manner, you add greater meaning to your tweet, and demonstrate your knowledge of American History.

3. In addition to the eight (8) tweets that you post summarizing the *Declaration of Independence*, you will also need to provide **at least four (4) tweets in response to your summary** of the *Declaration of Independence* – from four different people. At least two (2) of these tweets should include hashtags, as well. You can respond from the perspective of anyone who was alive (or still extremely influential) at the time the *Declaration of Independence* was written and signed: early July of 1776.

You are not limited to the individuals below, but here are a few possibilities.

*Abigail Adams*

*John Adams*

*John Hancock*

*Samuel Adams*

*James Otis*

*Benjamin Rush*

*George Washington*

*King George III*

*William Pitt*

*George Grenville*

*Charles Townshend*

*John Dickenson*

*Marquis de Lafayette*

*Paul Revere*

*Ben Franklin*

*Sally Hemings*

*Phillis Wheatley*

*Patrick Henry*

*Gabriel – Richmond, VA slave*

*James Madison*

*Casmir Pulaski*

*Elizabeth Freeman*

*George Mason*

*Alexander Hamilton*

*Charles Cornwallis*

*John Burgoyne*

*Thomas Paine*

*John Locke*

*Baron Montesquieu*

*Jean Jacque Rousseau*